

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2832

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, February 20, 2018

Title: An act relating to ensuring the passport to college promise program is available to certain populations of foster youth.

Brief Description: Ensuring the passport to college promise program is available to certain populations of foster youth.

Sponsors: Representatives Kilduff, Stambaugh, Tarleton, Haler, Orwall, Graves, Kagi, Hudgins, Appleton, Doglio, Pollet, Gregerson and Santos.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/09/18, 95-3.

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/20/18, 2/20/18 [DP-WM].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends the Passport to College Promise program to students who have emancipated from the federal foster care system, a tribal foster care system, or from out-of-home placements under the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Ranker, Chair; Palumbo, Vice Chair; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Carlyle, Lias, Miloscia, Nelson and Short.

Staff: Kellee Gunn (786-7429)

Background: Passport to College Promise Program. In 2007, the Legislature established the Passport to College Promise program for students who have emancipated from the state foster care system after having spent at least one year in care after their sixteenth birthday. To qualify for the scholarship, a student must:

- be a Washington resident;

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- be enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education by age 21;
- be making satisfactory academic progress towards a degree or certificate program;
- not have earned a bachelor's or professional degree; and
- not pursue a degree in theology.

The scholarship cannot exceed undergraduate resident tuition and fees at the highest priced public institution in the state and the student's financial need, less a reasonable self-help amount, when combined with other public and private grants, scholarship, and waiver assistance. The scholarship is provided for a maximum of five years after the student first enrolls, or until age 26, whichever occurs first.

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) administers the program. Award amounts are dependent on the amount appropriated for the program. In 2016-17, WSAC awarded 335 scholarships, and all eligible students received awards of \$4,500 each. Recipients of this program get priority consideration for the State Need Grant. The Passport to College Promise scholarship is set to expire on June 30, 2022.

Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program. The Unaccompanied Refugee Minors program (URM) is a federal program that ensures unaccompanied children entering the United States receive care and services available to all foster children in the state. The URM program uses trained social work staff to help with the particular needs of refugee and immigrant youth. Children eligible for the URM program are under 18 years old and generally are refugees, entrants, asylees, victims of trafficking, certain minors with special immigrant juvenile status, and U visa holders. Children who entered the United States with family, but who experience a family breakdown may be eligible to enter the URM program.

The Department of Social and Health Services works with the Office of Refugee Settlement and provides these children the same child welfare benefits and services available to other children in Washington who require such services.

Tribal Welfare Systems. Both the federal and state Indian Child Welfare Acts recognize exclusive tribal jurisdiction over child custody proceedings involving an Indian child living within tribal territory.

For the foster care placement of an Indian child who is not domiciled or residing within the reservation of the child's tribe, the court must transfer the jurisdiction of the proceeding to the child's tribe upon the motion of the child's parent or custodian, the tribe, or the child if the child is 12 years of age or older. The tribe may decline to accept jurisdiction of the proceeding.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) is a statutory agreement between all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the United States Virgin Islands, governing the placement of children from one state into another state for the purposes of foster care or adoption. Under the ICPC, certain requirements must be met and procedures followed by the child welfare agencies of both the sending state and the receiving state.

The ICPC does not cover placements made in medical or mental health facilities or in boarding schools and does not cover placement of children made by parents, certain family members, or the child's guardian.

Summary of Bill: The Passport to College Promise program is extended to students who have emancipated from the federal URM program, a tribal foster care system, and from the state's foster care system that includes the placement of a dependent child in Washington under the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Foster youth face many challenges. Our state had the foresight to come up with the Passport to College Promise program. This bill expands the current program to other foster children. These children have real barriers to college.

The Passport to College Promise program provides financial support to foster youth. This bill would add about 200 foster youth to those who are currently eligible. This is a technical fix, and would expand eligibility to three important groups of foster youth that are currently left out. As a former foster youth, placed out of state, I know there are limited resources for students placed out of state. Youth from foster care have lower educational outcomes. Passport is a unique financial aid program that is successful and looked up to by other states.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Christine Kilduff, Prime Sponsor; Liz Trautman, The Mockingbird Society; Angel Gardner, The Mockingbird Society; Becky Thompson, Washington Student Achievement Council.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.